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24 May 1967

## MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Russia's Position on South Arabia

1. The current immediate interest of the USSR in South Arabia is to secure the earliest possible departure of the British and to prevent their influence from being replaced by Saudi Arabia, the US, or any other non-"progressive" power. The USSR sees the current jockeying for position in the local political scene as a struggle primarily between progressives and conservatives. This being the case, the outlook for fruitful discussions with the US on Aden's future seem dim.

2. With few indigenous assets in South Arabia - the Communist Party is small and not very influential - the USSR has been giving the UAR limited political and propaganda support for activities against the British. This backing is in line with general Soviet tactics of pursuing Soviet aims through local forces already committed to an anti-Western course. The USSR, however, would not want to see UAR-sponsored activities reach such an alarming stage that the British might delay withdrawal.

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3. Rumors are heard - as they are elsewhere in the Near East--that the Soviets are seeking a naval base at Aden. Whatever might be the advantage of such a base, it would seem to be incompatible with the Soviet political line to take on a role which the colonial powers have given up.

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